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Message Text

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16
ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 OMB-01 DRC-01

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3087

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 5016

E O 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB, RP
SUBJ: LABOR UNIFICATION FALSE START PROVOKES UPROAR

REF: A) MANILA A-364; B) MANILA 4688

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE PNTUC, A GROUP OF SECOND ECHELON TRADE UNION LEADERS WITH NO REAL POWER BASE, PRESUMPTUOUSLY ANNOUNCED THE "RESTRUCTURING" OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT ON APRIL 28. LABOR SECRETARY OPLE, AFTER CONFERRING WITH PRESIDENT MARCOS, WAS QUICK TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT ON APRIL 29 WHEN HE EMPHASIZED THERE COULD BE NO UNIFICATION OF LABOR WITHOUT PARTICIPATION OF THE MAJOR LABOR ORGANIZATIONS. THE PNTUC GROUP WAS OBVIOUSLY TRYING TO PULL A QUICK ONE THE EVE OF MAY 1 LABOR DAY CELEBRATIONS, AND HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY REPRIMANDED FOR ITS

RESTRUCTURING FALSE START. END SUMMARY.

1. IN GRANDSTAND PLAY WHICH CAUGHT MANY BY SURPRISE AND ENDED UP INVOLVING SOME HIGH GOVERNMENT OFFCIALS, PNTUC

(PHILIPPINE NATIONAL TRADE UNION CENTER) HELD CONVENTION APRIL 28 TO ANNOUNCE "RESTRUCTURING" (READ UNIFICATION) OF
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LABOR MOVEMENT UNDER ONE UNION - ONE INDUSTRY CONCEPT.

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PNTUC CONSISTS OF GROUP OF PRESUMPTUOUS SECOND ECHELON TRADE UNION LEADERS WITH NO REAL POWER BASE WHO ARE TRYING TO GET ON RESTRUCTURING BANDWAGON (SEE REF. A). IT INCLUDES NONE OF MAJOR LABOR ORGANIZATIONS. AS DEPART AWARE, SERIOUS UNIFICATION NEGOTIATIONS CURRENTLY UNDERWAY IN WEEKLY MEETINGS OF "BIG 5" (MENDOZA, TAN, OCA, POLICARPIO AND UNTIL HIS DEATH APRIL 26, PEDRO FERNANDEZ).

2. EMBASSY INFORMED BY LABOR UNDERSECRETARY INCIONG THAT DURING MEETING WITH PNTUC GROUP APRIL 27, LABOR SECRETARY BLAS OPLE TOLD THEM ITS ACTIONS WERE DIVISIVE AND REFUSED INVITATION TO BE GUEST SPEAKER. PLOT THICKENED WHEN PNTUC LEADERS MISREPRESENTED THEMSELVES TO PRESIDENTIAL ASSISTANT GUILLERMO DE VEGA AND TALKED HIM INTO ATTENDING THEIR "FOUNDING CONVENTION" AND SWEARING IN NEW OFFICERS. HOOD-WINKED PRESS CARRIED GRANDIOSE ACCOUNTS OF PNTUC STRENGTH AND RESTRUCTURING PLANS. SURPRISED BY THESE STORIES IN HIS CONTROLLED PRESS, PRESIDENT MARCOS APPARENTLY ASKED WHAT WAS GOING ON. ACCORDING TO FFW PRESIDENT JOHNNY TAN, SECRETARY OPLE SOMEWHAT FROSTILY POINTED OUT TO MARCOS THAT THE DEPARTMENTOF LABOR HAD NOT APPROVED OF THE PNTUC CON-VENTION. AN EMBARRASSED DE VEGA APOLOGIZED TO BOTH OPLE AND THE "BIG 5" LABOR LEADERS FOR UNWITTINGLY LENDING HIS NAME AND THE DIGNITY OF HIS OFFICE TO PNTUC PLOY. OPLE SWIFTLY SET RECORD STRAIGHT ON THE AFTERNOON OF APRIL 29 WHEN HE TOLD HASTILY-ASSEMBLED LABOR LEADERS (INCLUDING PNTUC) AND PRESS THAT RESTRUCTURING OF LABOR MOVEMENT WOULD BECOME POSSIBLE ONLY WHEN THE MAJOR TRADE UNIONS WERE INCLUDED IN ANY UNIFIED NATIONAL TRADE UNION CENTER.

3. COMMENT: PNTUC GROUP WERE OBVIOUSLY TRYING TO GET IN UNDER THE WIRE IN ANTICIPATION OF MAY 1 LABOR DAY CELEBRA-TIONS AT THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE (SEE REF. B), HOPING TO BE ABLE TO ANNOUNCE TO MARCOS THAT THEY HAD RESTRUCTURED ACCORDING TO HIS WISHES. THEY TRIED TO PULL A QUICK ONE AND HAVE NOW IN EFFECT BEEN OFFICIALLY REPRIMANDED BY OPLE FOR THEIR RESTRUCTURING FALSE START. IF SOMETHING IS TO BE SALVAGED FROM THIS EPISODE, PERHAPS IT WILL BE A REALIZATION ON PART OF LABOR'S "BIG BOYS" THAT IT'S ABOUT TIME THEY PICKED UP THE TEMPO OF THEIR UNIFICATION EFFORTS.
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